

## **Testimony opposing SB1146, An Act Concerning Cross-Endorsements**

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila and members of the committee. My name is Arlene Avery. I live in Stafford Springs. I hold a unique distinction in that I serve on the leadership committees of two of Connecticut's political parties. I serve on the Democratic State Central Committee representing the 13 towns of the 35th Senate District. I also serve on the Connecticut Working Families Party State Committee as a community activist member representing the Second Congressional District. In 2008, I was a Democratic candidate for State Representative. I sought out and received the cross-endorsement of the Working Families Party. I was impressed by how issue driven their endorsement process is. As those of you who also went through this process know, I had to fill out an extensive candidate questionnaire and then I was interviewed. Given that I had never run for public office before, I felt it made me a more defined candidate, helping voters to better understand who they were voting for.

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1146. I see no compelling reason to restrict a party's right to freely associate with and cross endorse another party's candidate, as long as that candidate is agreeable to the cross endorsement. Voters are free to vote for candidates outside of their party affiliation. Conversely, political parties ought to remain free to cross endorse candidates who they deem would best advocate for the interests of the people they represent.

Connecticut's cross endorsement law, Public Act 81-447 was passed in 1981, as part of a major revision of the state's election laws. It has been in effect for more than thirty years. It fosters more choices for voters and more opportunities for candidates to define themselves. Connecticut's cross endorsement law is a healthy reflection of our representative democracy and diverse electorate. The ability to cross endorse fosters free association and choice for our parties, candidates and voters. For these reasons I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 1146.

Thank you kindly for your attention and consideration.

**Written**  
**3/25/13**